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(71) Applicant(s)
WBF Limited

(Incorporated in the United Kingdom)

Park Mill, Clayton West, HUDDERSFIELD, HD8 9QQ,
United Kingdom

(72) Inventor(s)
Stephen Laithwaite
Heidi Hunter

(74) Agent and/or Address for Service
Bailey, Walsh & Co
5 York Place, LEEDS, LS1 2SD, United Kingdom

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(56) Documents Cited
US 5121330 A

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(54) Product improvement using database

(57) A method for improving and standardising the manufacture of business forms includes entering groups of data into a database, each group relating to a specific form and including, for example, customer details, price details, type of form, production levels, size and materials. The database then collates the groups and suggests adjustments which can be made to a new form to improve it taking into account previous forms in the database.

Customer Name		Stock	Monthly Usage
Customer Form ID		Stock Item	
Department	AE	Non Stock Item	
Selling Price	£12.00	Enter Form Specification	Comments
Unit of Issue	1	Annually Usage	
Max Release Number	1	Destination Code	
Quantity Stored	1	Vendor	S. Laithwaite
Numbered Forms	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Writing Device	Impact Pr
Number of Parts	0	Type of Form	CN

Figure 1

At least one drawing originally filed was informal and the print reproduced here is taken from a later filed formal copy.

The claims were filed later than the filing date within the period prescribed by Rule 25(1) of the Patents Rules 1995

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Enter Form Details

Enter Form Details

Customer Name

I.D.

Customer Form ID

Department

Selling Price

Unit of Issue

Max Release Number

Quantity Stored

Numbered Forms

Number of Parts

Stock

Stock Item

Non Stock Item

Monthly Usage:

Annually Usage:

Destination Code:

Vendor

Writing Device

Type of Form

Account Number

Enter Form Specification

Comments

Record 1 of 2

Figure 1

Form Specifications

Ink Colour	Depth	Inches	MM
Paper Colour	MM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weight per Part	Width	Inches	MM
Improvement Code	MM	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Form_Spec	Comments		
Material			
Account number	9876		
Reverse of Form			
Ink Colour			
Punched	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Special Punched	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

Record 1 of 2 >

Figure 2

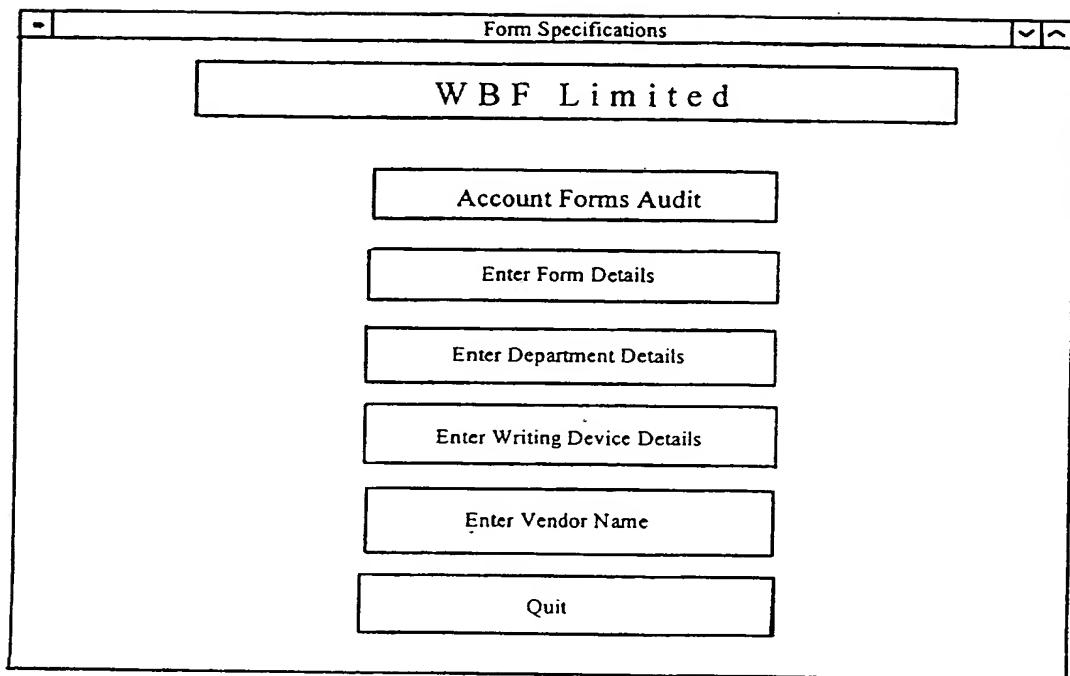


Figure 3

Product Improvement Method

The invention which is the subject of this application relates to a method for a manufacturing company environment to allow improvements to be suggested to products to be made for customers and in particular, but not exclusively to a system for use in the manufacture of business forms to meet specific customer requirements.

At the present time, in the manufacturing of business forms, there can be a relatively small number of types of business forms required to be manufactured but, various customer requirements can mean that the number of different types of forms and sizes of forms which are to be manufactured is greatly increased as typically no one customer requires the same arrangement of business form even though the purpose of the same may be similar. This therefore means that the business form manufacturer can find that they are manufacturing a large variety of business form designs and this can lead to an increase in down-time of the manufacturing apparatus due to the need for adjustments to the apparatus on a frequent basis, and uncertainty as to the specific requirements.

The aim of the present invention is to provide an audit style business form method whereby the company can create a database of those business forms which they produce at any one time and said database can then be accessed at any instant to gain information relating to a particular business form for a particular customer and thereby make reference thereto. A further aim of the invention is to provide the system so that it can provide improvement advice to the form designer or manufacturer and said improvement advice based on previous data held in the database. Thus the improvement advice could relate to advice on standardising the types of forms made for different customers to an increased extent thereby

minimising the amount of adjustment to the manufacturing apparatus and hence the requirement for down-time between jobs.

In a first aspect of the invention there is provided a method for improving and standardising product manufacture, said method comprising the steps of inputting data into a computer database in groups, each group of data relating to a particular product for a particular customer, collating said groups in a database and comparing said groups when a new group of data is input and, indicating to the user of the database any adjustments which can be made to the new form to improve the same relative to similar products data already held on the database.

Typically the improvements suggested can be any of standardising the size of the form to bring it into line with the size of similar forms made for other customers, suggesting an appropriate material from which the business form may be made, perhaps in terms of thickness of paper, card etc, recommending the type of print and/or ink which can be used and/or indicating to the person referring to the database any specific customer requirements which are required on all business forms made for that particular customer.

Typically the improvements can be suggested for the purpose of improving either or both of the quality of the business form to be produced and/or reducing down-time caused by manufacture of the new form and/or reducing the cost of manufacture of the same.

It is believed to be of particular importance that it is possible to collate and compare the designs of all of the business forms to be manufactured for a particular customer thereby ensuring that the design of the same is standardised so improving the appearance of the forms to the customer and also minimising the design

requirements and time required for designing any new business forms.

Typically the input of groups of data will relate to, entering details of the form to be produced, entering details of the department in charge of the design of the form, entering writing device details, entering the customer name and any other relevant information.

In a further aspect of the invention there is provided a method for collating a database for manufactured products, said method comprising the steps of inputting groups of data into a database, each group relating to a particular business form for a particular customer and then adding the said groups into a data base so that the same can then be accessed and referred to.

Typically selected enquiries can be made for any of customer name, type of form, year of production of forms, type of paper, price or any allocated subject.

Thus it will be seen that the database so formed allows easy reference for any person in the manufacturing company from design; sales through to manufacture departments and thus the database is extremely useful in providing an information resource.

Specific details of the invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings wherein;

Figure 1 illustrates the display for inputting a group of data,

Figure 2 illustrates a display for inputting a group of data relating particularly to the business form and

Figure 3 illustrates a display of a general menu which allows the database to be referred to.

Referring firstly to Figure 1, when details of a new business form are to be input into the database, the display on Figure 1 is shown on a computer screen. The display includes areas for the input of the customer name, a customer identification, identification for the particular form for the customer, the department identification, the selling price indicated, the units to be released, manufactured and stored, the number of parts for the form and also whether the form is to be kept as a stock item or a non-stock item.

The group of data can also be updated by inputting figures relating to the monthly usage of the form once it has been manufactured and in relation to the annual usage and also, indication of a destination code is required. Furthermore, the type of printer for the form is indicated and it may also be possible to indicate a code relating to the type of form to be produced if the type of form has been standardised.

Turning now to Figure 2 it will be seen that further specification information relating to the form can be included. Said further information can relate to the ink colour, paper colour, weight per part, form specification, material of manufacture, the ink colour, whether it is to be punched or specially punched and also the size of the form. Importantly, there can also be provided an improvement code input which allows the person inputting the group of data to request whether or not any specific improvements can be suggested by the database to bring it into line with other business form specifications already held on the database. Thus, if there is an improvement possible then this will be indicated by the database to the person referring to the system.

Finally, Figure 3 illustrates the general menu which appears at the start of the system and which allows access to be gained to the system.

Thus it is envisaged that the method according to the present invention allows information generated during normal design and sales of a business form design to a customer to be held and stored on a computer database and therefore provides a method for using this database to suggest improvements to new forms as and when they are input into the database in groups of data. Thus, the information from previous forms can be used for new forms thereby minimising down-time and saving costs yet possibly improving the quality of the product to the customer.

It should also be appreciated that reference herein to business forms does not restrict the use of the system and it is envisaged that the system herein described is applicable to any manufacturing environment where a plurality of product types are manufactured for a plurality of customers.

CLAIMS

1. A method for improving and standardising business form manufacture, said method comprising the steps of;
 - inputting data into computer databasing groups, each group of data relating to a particular product for a particular customer;
 - collating said groups on the database and comparing said groups when a new group of data is input and,
 - indicating to the user of the database any adjustments which can be made to the new business form to improve the same relative to similar product business forms data already held on the database.
2. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the improvements suggested can be any of:-
 - standardising the size of the form to bring it into line with the size of similar forms made for other customers;
 - suggesting an appropriate material from which the business form may be made;
 - recommending the type of print and/or ink which can be used and/or indicating any specific customer requirements for all business forms made for that particular customer.
3. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the improvements suggested are for the purposes of improving either or both of the quality of business form to be produced and/or reducing down time caused by manufacture of the new form and/or reducing the costs of manufacture of the same.
4. A method according to Claim 1 wherein an input of groups of data relate to entering details of the form to be produced, entering details of the department in charge of the design of the form, entering writing device details, entering customer name.

5. A method for collating a database for manufacture of business forms, said method comprising the steps of inputting groups of data into a database, each group relating to a particular business form for a particular customer and adding the said groups into a database so that the same can be accessed and referred to.
6. A method according to the preceding claim wherein the selected enquiries can be made for any of customer name, type of form, yearly production of forms, type of paper, price or any other allocated subject.
7. A method as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.



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Claims searched: 1-4, 7

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Patents Act 1977
Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK Cl (Ed.O): G4A (AUB)

Int Cl (Ed.6): G06F

Other: Online: WPI

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
X	US 5121330 (BLAHA ET AL)	1 at least

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.